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God's Purposes in This Age

BY
PROF. E. F. STROETER

SEVENTH THOUSAND

CHARLES C. COOK

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God's Purposes in this Age

A GREAT deal of confusion and error in dealing with the prophetic word arises from want of discrimination between the different dispensations and their divinely appointed objects. That God has a purpose in all His dealings with man, no one will deny who believes at all in God's Word. That God has in the various ages or dispensations of the past been dealing with our race along different lines, no one can deny. Even a tyro in the study of God's Word is able to see the difference dispensationally, between the age ending with Noah, *e. g.*, and the age of Moses. Again we are all very sure that there is a decided contrast between the Mosaic and the present Christian dispensation. We do not say that all Christians have a proper and complete appreciation of this, but we point to the fact, by way of illustration, that an existing distinction between the two is acknowledged and not disputed. It is also conceded that certain operations of divine grace and power on the human life, which do take place in one dispensation, did not and could not possibly take place in a preceding one. No intelligent Christian will deny that in the one point of worshipping God alone, he enjoys privileges which for the most pious and devoted Jew of the Mosaic age were entirely out of the question. Does anybody, not an unbeliever, dare to criticise God for making such dis-

tinctions? Have we any right to ask God why He did not allow to the Jew what He now allows to the meanest Gentile, if he only believes in the Son of God?

It is seen at once that any attempt at removing the divinely ordered distinctions and differences between these two dispensations, will involve us in the most serious and hopeless difficulties. A study of the 15th chapter of Acts, and of Paul's letter to the Galatians is very helpful and suggestive along these lines. It is dispensational truth that Paul is contending for by the Holy Spirit. The divinely established marks of the present dispensation must not be obliterated. The laws and ordinances given to the Jew in the former age, divine, holy and perfect as they are, cannot and must not be forced on the Gentile to whom they were not and are not given, and who comes in only under the law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus.

But we are not now concerned with that retrospective side of the truth.

In this paper we mean to present, rather, some aspects of this dispensational question that look forward to a coming age. Every Bible student is familiar with the expression occurring frequently in the New Testament, "the age to come." This, unfortunately, appears in the authorized version as the "world" to come. This has not only created the popular illusion that the end of this age (*aion*) meant the end of the "world" (*kosmos*); it also has tended to hide from the eye of Bible readers the full meaning of that passage in Hebrews 1: 2: "By whom [Christ] He also made the ages"—dispensations—not the "worlds"; although the latter is just as true of Him. The Word of God plainly indicates that the making of ages is intimately

connected with and essential to the unfolding of God's purposes in Christ Jesus.

It becomes thus a practical question for every one in Christ, to be of the Lord's mind concerning the "ages" which He made in Christ. I cannot afford to be in the dark here any more than at any other point of my relations with Him who is the Head. The Church which is called Christ's body, Christ's own fullness, not only has the right but is under the holiest obligations to be in perfect harmony with her Lord and Head as to His plan of the ages.

And now let us go to the Word for the answer to a few questions on this subject.

I.

What is the uniform signature imprinted by God's own Spirit in the Word upon the present (Church) age?

THE following is a list of all New Testament passages that characterize this present age (world) as far as they come into consideration in answering our question.

Rom. 12:2—And be ye not conformed to this *world*; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God.

1 Cor. 2:6-8—Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect; yet not the wisdom of this *world*, nor of the princes of this *world*, that come to naught; but we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before

the world unto our glory; which none of the princes of this *world* knew; for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

2 Cor. 4:4—In whom the god of this *world* hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

Gal. 1:4—Who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from the present evil *world*, according to the will of God and our Father.

2 Tim. 4:10—For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present *world*.

Tit. 2:12—Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present *world*.

For the sake of completeness we give in addition other New Testament texts where the present age (world) is mentioned, but not characterized specially: Matt. 13:22; Mark 4:19; Luke 16:8; 20:34; 1 Cor. 1:1:20; Eph. 1:21; 1 Tim. 6:17.

Here we have then, first, Paul warning the Romans not to be conformed to this age. Could the apostle have believed the tendencies of this age to be good and wholesome at any time, and given such warning?

Next, he contrasts the wisdom of this age with that divine wisdom, the gift of God, the manifestation of God's Spirit in mind and heart of the believer. A stronger contrast cannot be imagined—the wisdom of God unto our glory; the wisdom of this world unto the rejection of Christ, the Lord of glory.

2 Cor. 4 gives no uncertain sound as to the controlling deity of this age. We hear so much in our day of the "Zeitgeist," as the Germans call it, the spirit

of the age of which so much is said. Paul knew him; as "the prince of darkness," he marks him. Beware of him, Christian believer!

In the opening of the letter to the Galatians, it is stated as the object of Christ's giving Himself for our sins, "that He might deliver us from this present evil age." What a mighty power for evil this present age must constitute in the divine mind, if Christ's atoning sacrifice is represented as the only thing availing for deliverance from it.

Paul's complaint to his son Timothy, that Demas had forsaken him, having loved this "present age," throws a very peculiar light on the boasting so common in our day in Christian circles, over the "glories of this present age." That the world should be in love with this age seems very natural. But that Christians should conform to the world in this age is very strange, to say the least.

And when, lastly, in Titus we are exhorted that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly in the present "age"—the inference is evident, that in the apostle's mind ungodliness and worldly lusts are the characteristics of this present age.

This ends the list of descriptions in the New Testament, the only standard work on the present age acknowledged by all Christians. Where are the New Testament passages that speak of a "glorious gospel age?" of a "wonderful Holy Ghost age?" of a "mighty revival and missionary age?" of an age of "progress and advancement," an age of "marvelous and mighty achievements of the human mind," an age "of moral uplift and spiritual broadening?" and a thousand other

fulsome eulogies of this present age that have gained currency even among multitudes of Christians. There is absolute silence throughout the pages of the New Testament record. They utterly refuse to give this present age any other signature but that of evil. We challenge the production of a single word, by a New Testament writer, containing, over against the abundant testimony given above, anything in rebuttal. The very thought of looking for any rebuttal among the pages written by divine inspiration is preposterous. Testimony so plain, so abundant, so full, can never be overthrown by the most skilful twisting of any number of passages, if found. What shall we say then? We are left our choice of several dilemmas.

Either the apostle Paul was right in his characterization of this present evil age, or else he was wrong. If he was wrong in this, in what was he right then? This is dilemma number one.

Number two: Either the apostle foresaw by the Spirit the tendency of this entire gospel age in which he lived and in which we also claim to live, or he did not foresee it. If he did not, in how far is he a true prophet of the New Testament, as he claims to be? Eph. 3:5:1 Thess. 4:15.

Dilemma number three: Either we are living in the same age of which Paul wrote, out of which to deliver us Christ died, to which we are not to be conformed, which we should not love as Demas did, or we are living in a different one. If we do, in what age of the world are we living? When did the "present age" of Paul cease to be the "present age" for us? What was the crisis of the two ages? By what are they dispensationally separated or differentiated?

How much of apostolic teaching and injunction given for "this present age" (in the apostle's mind) still applies to us? How much of it is obsolete and out of date?

No, beloved, let us not be deceived. The gospel of the grace of God is still to be preached. Sinners are still to be warned to flee from the wrath to come. Weary souls are still to be invited to come unto Him who gives rest. Children of God are still born of that incorruptible seed, the Word of God, by His Spirit. Saints are still being rooted and grounded in their most holy faith. We are still serving the living and true God and are waiting for His Son from heaven. We are still wrestling, not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the worldrulers of this darkness, Eph. 6:12 (*R.V.*). We are still denying ungodliness, looking for that blessed hope, the glorious appearing of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

What then? Shall we accept or substitute man's word for God's? Shall we hesitate to submit to the uniform divine verdict "evil," spoken of this present age? God forbid. Is it not plainly though most painfully evident what a blinding influence "the god of this age" has exerted over multitudes of professing Christians who know no bounds in their enthusiasm, and no limit in their glowing language, when speaking of the glories of the age we live in, and of the still greater glories that are before us, just across the border line of the twentieth century?

We do not deny nor underestimate in the least the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth—nay, we magnify it. For it saves and delivers

from this present evil age. Though in the world, we are not of it. Though living in this age, we do not live like unto it. Our life is hid with Christ in God. Our wisdom is that hidden, mysterious wisdom the world knows not of, but judges foolishness. Our hope is not progress or advancement along the line of material, moral and spiritual improvement, but our hope is resurrection for our mortal bodies, full deliverance for our redeemed souls and spirits, when He who is our life shall appear. And even for the world, the poor, sin-cursed earth, the groaning creation, our hope is not an endless ebbing and flowing of civilization and barbarism, despotism and liberty, a constant struggle between the weak and the strong, the poor and the rich, the high and the low—but the establishment of a government upon His shoulder, whose right it is, upon the throne of David and upon His kingdom, to order it and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this. But all this not in the present evil age, but in the age to come. Of this more hereafter.

II.

Do the prophecies of the New Testament indicate that this present age will undergo a change for the better before its close?

WE have shown in the previous chapter that the uniform signature imprinted in God's word upon this present age is evil, and only evil. The question naturally arises: Is this to go on forever? Is there not to be a better age, an age of righteousness and of peace? Are we not warranted in looking

for very material and radical changes from the existing order of things? Undoubtedly, we are. God's word is full of the most explicit promises to that effect. The eyes of the Old Testament prophets were filled with the glories of an age to come in which "the righteous shall flourish; and abundance of peace;" an age when there will be deliverance for the poor and the needy, and their soul shall be delivered from deceit and violence (Ps. 72:7, 12, 14); an age when "all the ends of the earth shall have seen the salvation of our God" (Ps. 98:3) and when "the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea" (Hab. 2:14); a time when "out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem," and when the nations "shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning-hooks;" when "nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." Isa. 2:3, 4. A time of deliverance even for the brute creation from the bondage of vanity to which it has been subjected in hope, when "the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them." Isa. 11:6, 9; Rom. 8:20. A time when all nature shall rejoice once more, when "instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the briar shall come up the myrtle tree;" when the heavens rejoice and the earth is glad; when the sea roars and the fulness thereof; when the field is joyful and all that is therein; when all the trees of the wood rejoice. Isa. 55:13; Ps. 96:11, 12.

That this time has not been in days past, after those

words were spoken, requires no proof. That their fulfilment is not upon us, at this present time, is equally evident. Their fulfilment is still an object of hope and of "earnest expectation."

How is it to be brought about? Are the forces and agencies now at work to produce a gradual change in the moral complexion of this present "evil" age? Are sin, and vice, and wickedness, and crime, and lawlessness, and godlessness to disappear? slowly, perhaps, but steadily and surely? In other words, is the coming age, the age of peace and of righteousness, to be the result of an evolution out of the present order of things? Or is the present "evil" age to continue in its character as such without any change for the better, until the "age to come" is ushered in by judgments?

Before we turn to the New Testament, our final authority on all questions concerning this age, for a decisive answer, we may with profit look for a few moments at another, two-fold line of argument. The first is from history, the other from analogy.

The existing order of things has occupied considerable space in the history of the world. The age before the flood lasted something like 1,600 years only. From Noah till Moses, was not more than 900 years, while 1,500 years cover all the time between Moses and Christ. It will be seen at a glance that this our age has already been extended beyond the duration of any of its predecessors. It cannot, therefore, be considered an unfair demand that, if this age is ever to take on an essentially different moral complexion, it should have shown this tendency in a very unmistakable way long before this. It will never do to answer this demand by pointing out one-sidedly, all

the improvements, advancements and achievements of the human race under the beneficent influence of Christianity. We do not dream of denying or belittling them. All we wish to press is the point that such a picture of the world's condition at the present time is not complete, is not true to *all* the facts in the case. There is a higher degree of civilization, there is more wide-spread culture, there are wonderfully improved conditions of life beyond anything previously known. All this we fully and readily admit. We only ask, persistently, have the powers of evil and of sin in the world, have beastly crimes, devilish hate, and utter disregard for divine and human law, materially lessened or weakened? Are we not rather confronted by the tremendous fact that the very centres of our proudest civilization and culture are also the very hot-beds of nameless sins and of unspeakable corruption? Is it not true that in the shadow of our church spires, deeds of darkness are done, that would make a savage stand aghast? In other words, is it not just as true of this age in its latest development as it was eighteen centuries ago, that wherever the light shines brightest, the shadows are deepest and darkest?

Some very pertinent questions might also be asked as to the actual impression our nineteenth century Christianity and civilization are making upon the thousand millions of heathen in the world. Has a "century of unparalleled missionary activity" made any considerable headway, numerically, against the increase of heathenism in the world? The total number of conversions reported by all the evangelical missionary societies for the last ten years in India is 75,-

000, a record that should fill every Christian heart with gratitude. But during the same period of time the natural increase in the number of heathen in the same land has been over three millions. We have no figures giving the increase in the number of Buddhists, Spiritualists and other heathens, in Boston and other "Christian" centres, during this closing decade of the nineteenth century. We may be sure that the seed sown at the World's Parliament of Religions in Chicago, will not fail of an abundant harvest. But we do not wish to press that question now. Every candid observer of our own times will freely admit that there is not apparent any very perceptible degree of weakening in the power of error, superstition, delusion, sensuality, covetousness and other sins too numerous to mention in the very midst of Christendom.

Paul's description of the last days, as given in his second epistle to Timothy (chap. 3:1-7) needs no retouching whatever to be taken for a truthful picture of great masses of civilized and Christianized society in the closing week of this nineteenth century.

If Christianity, as many claim, is destined by means of existing agencies to transform the moral aspect of the world at large, it is high time that it should go about its business. If we believe *that* to be the mission of the gospel in the present age, we should not for a moment hesitate, in the light of the historical development of Christianity in the world, to pronounce it an egregious and hopeless failure.

Again, let us look at the argument from analogy. The number of dispensations preceding this present age is variously calculated. But whether we accept of three or more, the leading features in the develop-

ment and winding up of each of them have been of precisely the same character. Man in the age before Noah filled the earth with violence. No doubt from the union of the sons of God with the daughters of men, there resulted a race who were not only physical, but also intellectual giants. It is by no means certain that the intellectual leaders of mankind in our time would prove superior or even a match for them. The fond assumption that intellectuality in man has been constantly in the ascendant, that man's grasp of philosophical truth has steadily grown stronger through the ages, is only an assumption. Multiplying evidence from the most ancient monuments and records shows more and more clearly its fallacy. Man has not fallen "upward" in any sense.

How did that age end? In judgment. Was Noah and his family an "evolution" of his age? No, they were a saved remnant; the rest perished in the waters of God's judgment with all their civilization and achievements.

Again, look at the Mosaic dispensation. How markedly had God's favor been shown to His chosen people, Israel! What could be done to His vineyard that the Lord had not done? The demonstrations of His saving power in their history had been as clear and signal as the promises of His abiding favor had been numerous and gracious, if they only would remain a separate people, holy to the Lord God of hosts. Out of the first captivity in Babylon a gracious restoration had taken place. Reformation had come under Ezra and Nehemiah. Idolatry had been burnt out of the nation's heart by the fires of tribulation. Then came the most marvelous visitation of the people—

the first advent of God's own Son, the Son of David, the promised Redeemer. He came unto His own, but His own received Him not. The temple worship had never been more regular and splendid than it was in those days. Herod had lavished treasure upon rebuilding and beautifying the sanctuary. The age was very "religious." It was also eminently literary and scholarly. It was the Augustan age of arts and letters. A galaxy of brilliant minds were shedding the lustre of their genius over those days. Greek culture had taken a wonderful hold upon the minds of thousands in Israel. How did that age end? In most terrible judgment upon Judah and Jerusalem. Tens of thousands slain. Myriads into captivity worse than death. The glorious temple destroyed, not one stone left upon another. The "city of the Great King" a heap of ashes—Jerusalem trodden down of the Gentiles even until now.

Was the pentecostal Jewish church an "evolution" of the Mosaic age? Most assuredly not. They were again a "remnant" saved by divine power and grace whom the roaring waves of the awful judgment did not and could not overwhelm. A golden thread continued all through the "times of the Gentiles" as a sure earnest, and pledge, that "God hath not cast away His people which He foreknew." Rom. 11: 1-2.

This is the lesson of analogy. Not one of the various dispensations of God's dealings with man has ever ended in anything but manifest failure of the people at large, to understand and apprehend God's gracious purposes, divine judgment, and the saving of a remnant out of the general wreck of institutions

religious, social and political, in and through whom God could and did carry forward His gracious purposes of redemption.

And now let us turn to the Word of God itself for a definite and decisive answer to our question. At a very critical period in His earthly ministry, which may well be called a turning point, when the rulers of His people had virtually rejected Him by ascribing His works to the power of the devil, Jesus began to teach his disciples the "mysteries of the kingdom." To them they were to be known; from the people they were henceforth to be hid. Among the seven parables which He spake on that occasion (Matt. 13) the parable of the wheat and the tares is most significant for our inquiry; because in it more clearly than in any other, we have the Master Himself announce the fact, that in the development of this age to which this mystery of the kingdom undoubtedly applies, both wheat and tares, God's sowing and the devil's sowing, should grow side by side and ripen out unto the harvest. The good seed will not disappear until it is garnered, thank God. But neither are the disciples even permitted—much less commanded—to pull up and remove from the field (the world) the tares. The testimony of the history of the gospel in the world as we have seen, has been absolutely uniform to the correctness of the interpretation that the powers of evil, as well as of good are to continue side by side during this age, neither overcome by the other, both ripening, intensifying until the harvest of the age.

Again if we study very carefully and thoroughly the two grand panoramic views which Christ, Israel's greatest prophet, gives of the development of the age

until His appearing in the clouds of heaven (Matt. 24 and Luke 21) two things become very apparent and both are very significant. First the eloquent silence of Jesus on the question of any betterment or hopeful development of the age lying between His approaching death and His glorious coming again. Could not Jesus see the wonderful nineteenth century progress of the human race? Could He not discern the age of steam and electricity, the age of inventions and discoveries, the age of the popularizing of science and the wide dissemination of knowledge, the age, too, of the intensest religious activity, the world has ever known? What is the meaning of that silence? Can it be that Christ's estimate of these "wonderful achievements" is different from that of "Christendom?" Or, is it possible that Christ does not speak of it, or has it in His mind when He mentions "the days of Noah?" He searches in vain who seeks in these wonderful discourses of the only teacher that can speak "with authority" for any, even the slightest allusion to a gradual, slow but sure, change for the better in the development of this age. Its consummation Christ characterizes unmistakably by comparing its close with the days of Noah and of Lot. Are Sodomitic sins unknown to the "elegant" Christian society of our day? Is "violence" one of the unknown tendencies of this our age? Let these His words be heeded by all that have ears to hear. They give no uncertain sound. He plainly foretells judgment swift and sure, coming unawares like a snare upon the secure world, which goes on in its trading, trafficking and money-making until the day of the Son of Man is upon it. Matt. 24:39; Luke 21:35.

Though the testimony of Christ needs no confirmation, let us make assurance doubly sure by another inspired witness. Paul is the apostle to the uncircumcision. Through his gospel this present age in its Gentile-Christian aspect has really been ushered in. He is surely competent authority on any question concerning this age.

Quite early in his ministry among the Gentiles he wrote in his first letter to the church at Thessalonica, concerning the coming of the Lord and the end of the age. We would call special attention to the opening verses of the fifth chapter. The contrast between "*you*," the believers, and "*they*," the unbelieving, is very marked. "*You*" know perfectly (from his oral teachings, no doubt) "that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night." But "*they*," when they shall say, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. Such language is utterly irreconcilable with the theory of a gradual evolution of this present evil age into the blessings and glories of an age of peace and righteousness before the coming of the Lord.

Again, only a little later, the same apostle writes to the same church, 2 Thess. 2:3, that the day of the Lord shall not come except there come a falling away first, and the revelation of the man of sin, the son of perdition. Passing by the allusion to the falling away, which would most naturally refer to a general departure from Scriptural faith among the professing churches, let us look for a moment at the other statement concerning the revelation of that man of sin, the Anti-christ. Paul affirms (v. 7) that in his day "the

mystery of lawlessness did already work" (R. V.) Only there was a restraint that must be taken out of the way. Then shall be revealed the Lawless One. And him shall the Lord Jesus slay with the breath of His mouth, and bring to naught by the manifestation of His coming (v. 8, R. V.) Whatever may be the correct interpretation of "that which restraineth," it is very evident that Paul never meant that it would gradually but surely destroy the power of lawlessness in this age. On the contrary, Paul plainly teaches a "taking away" of this restraining influence, and then a full manifestation of that Lawless One according to the working of Satan with all power, and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceit of unrighteousness for them that are perishing (vs. 9 and 10.) And this Lawless One is to be brought to naught, not by existing agencies, but by the manifestation of the Lord's coming. Surely, Paul's teaching exactly harmonizes with Christ's in the parable of the tares. The devil's seed will ripen out and head up in that man of sin toward the close of this age, immediately preceding the consummation of the age, the brightness of Christ's appearing.

We can only allude to another, Paul's closing testimony, as it were, in the last letter he wrote, the second one to his son Timothy. Let the reader carefully study and ponder over chapter 3:1-9, 13.

He will be convinced that Paul never imagined that this present age would grow better and better, and would finally, by the advances of an electrical civilization, blaze into the full blown glories of a Millennial day. Nay, verily, this age like all the others that preceded it, will end in judgments, swift, sure and

terrible. The Lord's little flock will be saved out of them; they will not come into judgment, for God hath appointed them unto salvation. Religiousness and culture will no more keep this generation from the wrath to come, than it did generations past.

Separation from this present evil age is the only salvation.

And with a saved remnant from Jew and Gentile, His own body, the Lord will continue to unfold in the ages to come the unsearchable riches of His grace upon the residue of men and all the nations, Eph. 2:7; Acts 15:17. This we believe to be the harmonious teaching of all New Testament writers on the question under consideration.

III.

Does the New Testament teach that the world is to be converted to Christ by the gospel during this age?

THIS is not a mere speculative question. It is one of great practical importance. All Christian, especially all missionary activity is to be regulated according to the answer found to this question. The eagle was not created to swim and to dive, nor the whale to soar above the mountain peaks. Each in his appointed sphere fulfils his purpose. Each in the sphere of the other would be an abnormity, doomed to destruction.

Were the apostles of Christ divinely commissioned and equipped for the "conquest of the world through the gospel?" Is it the business of the Church, in this present age, to "establish the universal dominion of

Christ over the world and the nations by existing agencies?"

From pulpit and platform, in winged words of lip and pen, in stately prose or raptured poetry, the ear of the Church has been filled with sentiments like those expressed above. We cannot remember, from all the missionary sermons and addresses we have listened to, that in them any one motive, or any number of motives were appealed to more frequently, more eloquently, more persistently, than the one "grand object" of "bringing this world to the Redeemer's feet, speedily, through the preaching of the gospel." This may, without injustice, be spoken of as the leading and most popular incentive to missions at the present day. And the impression seems to prevail that it is about the only successful appeal that can be made to the churches. Consequently those who do not hold that the world is to be converted by the preaching of the gospel during this age, are very frequently charged with "cutting the very nerve of missionary activity" by holding a contrary belief. A belief in "the conquest of the world for Christ by our missionary operations" seems to have become one of the "fixtures" in the household of the Christian churches of to-day.

Recent utterances, however, of prominent advocates of this principle of missionary activity seem to indicate that the supreme confidence in the absolute infallibility of that principle has been somewhat shaken. We remember, twenty, and more years ago it was a very favorite method to indulge in calculations tending to show at the then prevailing ratio of increase in missionary effort and success, the closing years of this century would bring the Church very near, if not

quite up to the desired goal of seeing "all the ends of the earth join in one grand jubilee of redemption and peace."

It is true, the ends of the earth are joined to-day as never before; but not in the anticipated jubilee chorus of peace and good will, but in an ever deepening groan for deliverance. Just now the most rapidly "christianized" nation of eastern Asia, Japan, is pouncing fiercely upon its colossal enemy, China, ready to fill land and sea with the horrors of bloody war. And the whole world is holding its breath to see how far that conflagration may spread.

Careful comparison is made of the means and time expended, and the results accomplished. The fact that the natural increase by births in the heathen populations of the world during this "century of missions" has been to the number of converts from heathendom at the ratio of sixty-six to one, is being taken into the account. The spread of infidelity, indifferentism and worldliness in the churches at home will not be denied. All this has done much to tone down the glowing imagery thrown upon the canvass by missionary lecturers before the gaze of an admiring church, picturing "the speedy sway of the gospel banner over the whole world."

We suspect, however, that the hold of the "world-conquest" idea upon the hearts and minds of Christian people, is still very powerful. We are aware that in trying to show, from the Word of God, the fallacy and groundlessness of any such expectation, we expose ourselves to the charge of "robbing the Church of its most powerful motive in the holy work of missions." This would be very serious, if it could be

shown that we are enemies to the cause of missions. But we know that we love it. And we believe that our motive for loving it will not only "hold water" but will stand the trial of fire in "the evil day" approaching. We are not sure that the "world conquest" motive will stand that trial. We are quite confident it will not. We believe it to be spurious, unsound, deceptive. We would warn all lovers of Christian missions to subject it to a most rigorous scrutiny in the light of God's Word.

Let us look for a moment at the phrase, "to conquer this world for Christ." The curse of the age is in the phrase. It is so catching, so fascinating. Nothing like it for rhetorical effect. To engage in "conquering the world"—think of it! How this appeals at once to the imagination, the ambition, the love of conquest, and dominion, and power. And this "through the Church," and "in the present age." Think of the visions of world-wide sway over the minds and hearts of the millions of the race—by the Church! It is true, it is to be all for Christ. But then, the Church is to represent Him in all this here in the world. The mere suggestion of Christ's personal, visible return to take a hand in this "world-conquest" is cried down as "carnal and sensual." After the Church has finished the "conquest," let Him return. But before?—never! It is to be a "purely spiritual dominion," a conception to which the idea of a real, personal, visible presence of the King is declared to be utterly hostile.

Of course, every denomination and sect is at perfect liberty to picture to itself how large a share it may have in the conquest of Africa, and India, and of China for Christ. Denominational maps of the world

are in order. There will be the blue Presbyterian "kingdom of Christ," and the red Methodist "kingdom of Christ," and the water-green Baptist "kingdom of Christ," and a host of other principalities and powers representing the various divisions of the "purely spiritual dominion" of Christ in the earth. And think of the swelling rolls of membership, of the coming millions of adherents to "*our* faith," of the imposing institutions of "*our* church," the filling of "*our* treasuries," the increase in means and appliances, in intellectual and moral forces for the "uplifting of humanity," for social and political reform, and so forth.

If that is not to be the millennium of the Church in the world, what will? Alas, thousands of Christians picture to themselves and look for no other millenium!

But, we ask, what is the meaning of the phrase "conquering the world for Christ?" It surely cannot be meant that the surface area of this planet, with its millions of square miles of sea and land is to be "taken possession of for Christ" by the gospel. Titles in land and water are scarcely affected by preaching. There is a divine promise, it is true; that the meek shall inherit the land. But we do not find any substantial evidence, after eighteen centuries of church history, that "meekness" has been successfully employed in securing corner lots and broad acres. The church of Rome which holds more real property, perhaps, than any other, may not always pay the highest market price for her squares and sections, but we are quite sure she does not secure them merely by "being meek." That promise, to be sure, is not meant for this age. If it was, it has utterly failed of fulfilment.

But if "conquering the world for Christ" does not have reference to the acquisition of real estate and territorial possessions in His name, it surely must refer to the world's inhabitants, and to the powers that move upon the world. If so, we are still more puzzled about the true meaning of the phrase.

Is this the meaning, that the adherents of Christianity are to outnumber those of all other religions in the world? Is the question of the conquest to be decided finally, by majorities? Then, after eighteen centuries of Christianity in the world, it is too early in the day to speak very loudly about it. For, after all, including the results of this nineteenth "century of missions," only about one-third part of the human race are claiming to be adherents to that faith. And the less said about the large majority of them, the better. The vast numbers enrolled as Christians are subject to a considerable discount.

Or is this the meaning, that Christianity is to be firmly established in one part of the world, then to go on "conquering and to conquer" until all the ends of the earth have the Church firmly planted and Christian institutions permanently founded, endowed and flourishing forever? If so, then the question becomes unpleasantly pertinent, since true apostolic Christianity was planted in Judea and Samaria, in Syria and Asia Minor, in Greece and in Rome. What has become of it? Are the Greek church and the Romish church fair samples of this "conquering" quality of apostolic Christianity in this world? Then, we say, the less of that the better.

Or, again, is this the meaning, that Christianity is the only religion before which all other religious sys-

tems in the world, must and will go down, finally, and it alone will prevail and be triumphantly acknowledged as the only true religion of the world? Any student of history will be ready to ask at once, what about Mohammedanism? If the once flourishing churches of Northern Africa, of Asia Minor and Syria went down before it and were completely demolished, what is to prevent the flourishing churches of the western world to go down before some other scourge of God in the shape of a false religion, if found no more faithful than the churches planted by the very apostles? What about the prospect of demolishing Mohammedanism by the gospel? Does that look very hopeful? Or the outlook for reforming the Papal church, or the church with the Czar for its visible head, is that very bright?

And, still again, what about the "staying qualities" of Judaism, talmudical Judaism, that "synagogue of Satan?" Only a few millions of adherents. Papal bulls and royal manifestos without number have been hurled against it. And here it is with all its sinister influence unabated. We are puzzled, greatly puzzled, when we hear the phrase, "conquering the world for Christ," and see these strongholds of the enemy with no signs of weakening, not to mention the inroads of world and flesh upon the rank and file of the churches, nor the increasing number of traitors in her own pulpits and theological chairs, who for the vain glory of being considered "advanced thinkers," admit the enemy Unbelief into the very stronghold of the citadel of faith.

Let no one suppose that we doubt either the divine origin or the absolute superiority of the religion of Christ over any other. We are not behind any one

in claiming for it exclusive reality and authority. "No other name under heaven," is our watchword. Our desire is not to lower Christianity in the estimation of men, nor to exalt other systems of religion above it. But we do wish to nail down and unmask the delusive phrase about "conquering the world in this age through the gospel." If that phrase means what it says, it makes the gospel, thus far, a stupendous failure. The true membership of Christ's body, the Church, have never at any time, nor in any one country or province of this whole earth, outnumbered the spurious or the opponents. The Church as an organization, has never, during eighteen centuries, remained pure and uncorrupted by the world in any one place of its establishment. It has always decayed, apostatized; never once has it kept its first estate. The only permanent and stationary forms of Christianity have been the solid structure of the Papal hierarchy, and the mummified orthodoxism of the Eastern church. Other religions in the world are more ancient, more widely extended, and have exhibited far greater "staying qualities" than historical Christianity.

The phrase is unscriptural, misleading, deceiving; in short, mischievous in every way. There is not the first word in the instructions given by Christ to His apostles of the churches about "conquering the world for Him." Ye are my witnesses. Go, teach. Go, preach. That is the language of the Master. Witnessing is not conquering. It implies and challenges opposition and contradiction. Teaching and preaching are not conquering. They imply the possibility of resistance, unbelief and false teaching.

Not a word did Christ utter to lead His disciples

to expect they would ever in this age outnumber, or outrank, or outweigh in social, or political, or intellectual power His enemies, the children of darkness. Fear not, little flock, He said. There is no indication anywhere that it should ever be other than a *little* flock in comparison. If the truth be acknowledged to-day, the Lord's own are still a little flock, all boasting statistics to the contrary notwithstanding. There are few that enter in at the straight gate and walk the narrow way which leadeth unto life.

Not a hint anywhere by the Lord or His apostles that the Church should be a permanent institution in the world beyond this present age. The Gentile Church is warned distinctly that "thou standest only by faith, *if thou continue in God's goodness*: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off," Rom. 11:22. We know this is not a popular text to preach from. But it is the word of the Lord. Nor is this warning followed, as in the case of the nation Israel, by any reassuring; God can graft you in again. No such promise is held out anywhere to Gentile Christendom. The question, then, is simply: Has it continued in God's goodness? If not, it will surely be cut off.

And with this agrees the word of the Lord to the last of the seven churches, the Laodicean, the most boastful of them all, "I will spew thee out of my mouth, saith the Amen, the true and faithful witness," Rev. 3:14-22. And after the close of the third chapter of Revelation, the Church does not appear on earth any more. She is never mentioned again in connection with mundane affairs, except as the great harlot and mother of harlots, Babylon, in Rev. 17.

There is, then, not a word said about "conquering

the world for Christ by the Church." There is vouchsafed no permanency in history for the institutional church in this world. There is not to be any imposing majority of adherents to the great world-religion—Christianity. The gospel of the grace of God never has been nor ever will be accepted by the multitudes and masses. "Have they hated Me, they will hate you. Have they persecuted Me, they will persecute you." It must be true to the end of the Church period that His own are, like Himself, unknown, despised and rejected of the world, their life hid with Christ in God, veiled ones, hidden ones. The true bride is willing to wear this veil until the Bridegroom comes and takes her unto Himself; then the unveiling, the revealing with Him in glory to an amazed world. She who wants to be unveiled now before the gaze of this present age, is not the bride.

But the true believer is an "overcomer" after all, if not a world-conqueror. For this is the victory which *hath overcome* the world, even our faith. This is an accomplished fact, though there were but one against a thousand millions—he hath overcome.

Though all Christendom should fall away from the faith once for all delivered to the saints, he hath overcome. Though the boastful body should become utterly nauseous to the Lord and be spewn out of His mouth, he hath overcome. Though the whole world should go mad after the Beast and worship its image, saying: "Who is like unto the Beast?" he hath overcome the world!

It is not a question of subduing a wicked world for Christ and changing it into a good world by the gospel, but of becoming a new man in Christ, and of

overcoming a wicked and gainsaying world by faith in Him. It is not a question of numerical supremacy of "my church," or any church in this world; nor a question of institutional permanency of this or that form of Christianity in the world. It is a question, purely and simply, of individual faithfulness and steadfastness in the power of Him who hath overcome the world.

The time is approaching when none of the historical forms of Christianity will be endured in the world and by the world. The religion of the beast will become universal and world-wide. Rev. 13:3, 7, 8. Then will the true Church no longer be in the world, but with her Lord.

And the world? Not saved and converted by the gospel, but condemned for rejecting the Holy Spirit as it rejected Christ in the flesh; for corrupting his Church and making her a harlot, ripe for the awful judgment which the Lord shall execute with all His saints. The Lord Himself never expected to find the world converted at His coming again, but as it was in the days of Noah and Lot, Matt. 24:37; Luke, 18:8; 17:26-30.

Our argument, thus far, has been chiefly of a negative character. We have tried to remove some of the most common and popular misconceptions concerning this age, its character and tendency. We have shown that the expectation of a gradual change for the better in the moral complexion of this age is without foundation in the New Testament Scriptures. We have also seen that there is no support whatever in the writings of evangelists and apostles for the favorite idea of a world conquest for Christ by the Church

through the preaching of the gospel during this age. Let us now ask definitely:

IV.

Why must the glorious gospel of the Son of God be preached during this age?

THE question will be asked and shall be answered. If we say that the world during this age is not growing better, if we insist that it is not going to be "converted to Christ through existing agencies," we will surely have to give a reason for advocating, as we do, the most intensive and extensive missionary activity, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile. What is the use of preaching the gospel, it is often asked, if you do not expect to "convert the world" nor to "make it better?" It is strange that such a question should be asked, that after eighteen centuries of Christianity the true object of gospel preaching should still be a matter of controversy. It is both strange and saddening that those who do not aim at "world-improvement" or "world-conversion" in their gospel work should even be suspected of being untrue to the cause of missions or pessimistic as to the results of gospel preaching and church work.

Let us try to show, as concisely as possible, from God's own Word, why we delight and rejoice in carrying out God's purpose in this age by proclaiming the gospel ourselves, and by earnestly pleading to have it preached to the whole creation under heaven. We conceive the following to be the main reasons for carrying out the divine commission. "Go, preach the gospel."

1. That God be glorified. Luke 2:14.
2. That Christ's body be completed. Eph. 5:27.
3. That His return from heaven be hastened. 2 Pet. 3:12.
4. That the world stand convicted. John 16:8, 10.

1. No higher nor grander motive can be conceived for any created intelligence, angel or man, than to do all that we can do to the glory of God. Therefore, the angel chorus announcing the Saviour's birth in Bethlehem opens with the strain: "Glory to God in the highest." And while the heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth His handiwork, while all creation is one grand demonstration of divine glory, and honor, and power [Rev. 4:11], there never has been, nor ever could be such a marvelous display of grace, and love, and power, and wisdom as is manifested in the glorious gospel of the Son of God. This gospel, though foolishness in the eyes of a blinded world, is the wisdom of God and the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth, 1 Cor. 1:24; Rom. 1:16. In it God commendeth His love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Rom. 5:8. Abundant pardon, and peace which passeth all understanding are offered freely, without money and without price, to those who crucified His only Son, who hated Him without cause, who mocked and tortured Him. Unbounded love is seeking the vilest sinner, pardoning his every transgression, cleansing each foulest blot, making of him by marvelous power a new creation in Christ Jesus, changing him into the same image from glory to glory of God's own Spirit, making him an heir of

God, a joint-heir of Jesus Christ Himself. All this on one condition only—that of accepting God's unspeakable gift; and all fully, freely given. Oh, the matchless love, the unsearchable riches of grace! Will the world submit to the foolishness of such preaching? Will it give up its own "conceptions" of God for such a revelation? That does not enter into the account at all. God wants this offer made to "who-soever will," to any human being, without any distinction of race, color, sex, social position, intellectual capacity, moral character, that it may be manifest "in that day" that "His thoughts were indeed higher than man's thoughts, and His ways than man's ways." God will have the glory. No flesh shall have any before Him. 1 Cor. 1:29. Therefore this gospel of the grace of God, which meant crucifixion and death, even to the Spotless Man after the flesh, Christ Himself, and which means being crucified with Christ to every believer, this gospel must be preached. And though men in preaching this gospel, which admits of no human glorying, may seek their own glory and take glory from men, yet will God have those who proclaim good tidings of free salvation to every creature with an eye single to His glory. God's glory is in this offer, ours in accepting it and passing it on. And if the number of those who fully and freely take what is so fully and freely given, were ever so small, it would not lessen the divine glory in making such an offer. On the contrary, "*in that day*" men and angels would be bound to declare that God's glory was all the greater and more wonderful for offering what He did to a gainsaying world, for holding out invitations of boundless love only to be spurned and treated

with contempt or with indifference. So then, if there were no other motive, no other object in preaching this glorious gospel, this alone would be sufficient to fill any saved child of God with unfailing inspiration for witnessing in word and deed to God's riches of Grace in Christ Jesus. But there is more.

2. The body of Christ, His Church, is to be prepared and completed during this age. This is as Paul calls it, a great mystery. The history of this body has never yet been written. What men call church history is mainly the history of human failure to apprehend the mind of the Lord concerning His Church. The number of its members is not known and is beyond all human computation. Church statistics furnish no indication whatever on this point. They can deal only with professional or nominal Christians, or communicants. No statistician can search the hearts. They count in everybody, chaff and wheat, and are therefore always misleading and deceiving.

Sectarianism has played sad havoc with Christ's body. Men have gone on dissecting and separating along theological, governmental and other lines in their foolish and fruitless endeavors to harmonize the Scripture idea of the Church with their own conceptions. But the fact remains, the glorious, wonderful fact, which is absolutely proof against all the devices of Satan, against all the powers of Hades, against the perversities of human theology, prejudice and bigotry—the fact that Christ's own body is one, always and forever, one and indivisible.

Whosoever is born again of the Spirit by the Word becomes thereby a living member of this mysterious

and wonderful body. No matter, when or where, or how long he has lived; how feeble, how faulty, how imperfect, how deformed even his life may have been, whether by his own guilt or that of others—the Lord knoweth His own. Only he who hath not the Spirit of the Lord is none of His. But as many as are led by that Spirit, they are the sons of God. Rom. 8: 9, 14.

No matter if men honor them or excommunicate them. No matter if their views and opinions harmonize with those of others or not. No matter if they fit in with human Church organizations or not. All these things have a certain importance. But the question above all other questions is this. Is Christ our life, and is our life hid with Christ in God? To be sure, we cannot be indifferent to the presence and manifestation of this life in others. We delight in having communion with them. But where even this is impossible, fellowship with the Head, with Christ, and *through Him with all the members in the body*, is not a mere delusion or dream, but a blessed reality.

And in the building up of this body, in the calling out of its members from the world—for it is a called-out body, as the Greek name, *ecclesia*, indicates, we are co-laborers together with God through the gospel. Angels would have delighted to take an active part in this work. That sinful men and women should be chosen of God to be His co-workers in gathering and preparing living stones for the temple of the living God, surpasses comprehension. It is an unspeakably great and high privilege.

Our sole aim and object then must be to build upon that foundation, than which none other can be

laid, Christ Jesus, only gold and silver and precious stones, so that our work may stand the test of fire "in that day," 1 Cor. 3:11-15.

Men are apt to ask: Which is the true Church of Christ, and where is it to be found? A question which only faith in God's eternal purpose does not falter at. And this divine purpose, to gather out for Himself a people out of every nation by the gospel, spite of all human failure to apprehend, and to pursue simply and solely this one object, will not fail of its accomplishment. Christendom may apostatize, the Lacodicean Church may become utterly nauseous to the Amen, the true and faithful Witness—but He will nevertheless present to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, Eph. 5:27. It may become increasingly difficult in the very midst of professing Christianity to keep one's self unspotted from the world; but He will have even in the midst of worldly religiousness His overcomers, who are as He was in the world. To this end the glorious gospel of the grace of God, the wonderful mystery of Christ in us, the hope of glory, must and will still be preached, till He come to take His own unto Himself. And then, what? Ah, then the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout . . . the dead in Christ shall rise first. They will hear His voice and live. Then we who are alive and remain, will be caught up together with them in clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Then the question, Where is the true Church? can be answered very definitely. Then the divisions and separations of Satan's and man's devising shall end, forever. Then even death, the great

separator, must give up all the members of Christ's body. When the time is come for their final gathering, the grave cannot keep any of them. Then Christ Himself will see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied. Then the Bridegroom will rejoice in having the bride. Then will come our reward according to our works. How blessed, then, to be found faithful over few things, to have labored not in vain!

3. The world is to stand convicted through the preaching of the gospel. God has a controversy of long standing with the world and with the prince of this world, the devil. All past ages have witnessed their own peculiar phases of this conflict. All the dispensational dealings of God with the human race have been with a view to this controversy. It is not yet ended. It will not end with the present Dispensation, nor yet with the next one. The word of God foretells plainly a period of a thousand years, following this dispensation, during which Satan will be bound, and not at liberty to deceive the nations of earth. After the thousand years he shall be loosed out of his prison and shall go out to practise his wiles on the nations once more, as before; but only *once* more, and only "for a little season," thank God. Rev. 20: 2, 3, 7, 8. As a result we find "the number" of his dupes "as the sand of the seas" gathered to a final and decisive conflict with the (then manifested) saints of the Most High, and compassing about the beloved city (which is manifestly Jerusalem on earth, in Palestine). Thus we see that even millennial blessedness and glory upon the earth, amid the suspended activity of the Archdeceiver, have not brought about the conversion of all mankind nor the radical

extirpation of evil from human nature. It is desperately wicked.

At present the whole earth lieth in the Evil One, according to 1 John 5:19. (*R. V.*) It is under his influence and mastery. He is permitted, in the mysterious dispensation of God, to practise his deceits and have his work in the children of unbelief and disobedience. They are obedient unto him, their father; they are under his inspiration, though they may be very learned and very religious. John 8:44. Their minds are darkened, though they may rank among the most enlightened and cultured of the race. They are given over to the evil imaginations of their own hearts, though they may boast much of their philanthropy and their endeavors to "elevate the human race."

It was the devil's promise in paradise to "elevate the human race" which brought on our ruin. Let us not be deceived. And let us not be afraid to accept the Scripture teaching as to the actual dominion of the Archenemy over the minds and hearts of all who obey not the gospel of the Son of God. "The tares are the children of the wicked one; the enemy that soweth them is the devil." Thus saith the Lord. (Matt. 13:38, 39.) This finds full confirmation by the Holy Spirit through Paul in Eph. 2:2, where "the course of this world" is characterized to be "according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." Of course, all this sounds extremely shocking to the ears of polite and highly cultured society, within the church or without. They want to hear the gospel of "the fatherhood of God and brotherhood of man." The

Scripture statements of the fatherhood of the devil are utterly distasteful to them. But we must abide by the Word. Nothing else is safe and sure.

Being thus influenced and inspired, the world in its own wisdom (which is not from above) is imagining itself far above any and all revelations from God. "Yea, hath God spoken?" was the serpent's question six thousands years ago. He is bringing it to their minds and lips ever since. Not what God says about Himself is implicitly believed, but that which man "evolves from the inner consciousness of his being." Man creates, under the devil's inspiration, his own idea of God. This he worships. Whatever conforms to it, is "gospel" to him. Whatever opposes it, is "narrow-minded bibliolatry" and the like. God's words, as well as His works in creation and providence, must submit themselves to man's scientific, literary and historical criticisms. With man is the final decision how far, if at all, the Bible is inspired.

The doubt as to what God hath spoken, if at all, once established in the world's mind, the field is free for independent action. And this is what the world proposes to have. It is bound to be its own manager. A century of unprecedented inventions and discoveries, of achievement and success in making nature's forces do man's bidding, has done much to impress the world with the idea that the limit of the impossible has been pushed back almost indefinitely. Man's mastery over things, terrestrial and cosmical seems to border so closely on creative power that he has become more impatient than ever of being reminded that "in the beginning God created" everything. He is prepared to deny, or doubt, that this world was "Cre-

ated," after all. Most likely it was only "evolved." If so, then, it should proceed to "evolve." At any rate, there must be no interference from outside with man's determination to work out his own destiny.

God proposes to save the world. Man denies the necessity. If any saving is to be done, it must be in the line of "Developing the divine in man." Atonement, forgiveness of sin, new birth, are foolishness in the eyes of the world. In the face of God's revealed purpose to save men to the uttermost by the invisible power of the Spirit, through the Word, the world proposes to demonstrate how humanity can be its own saviour, lifting itself up out of barbarism, ignorance, superstition, to the highest plane of intellectual and moral excellence, where men will be "as gods, knowing good and evil." How is this controversy going to be settled? By an alliance, defensive and offensive, of the moral forces of the Church with the world? That seems to be the programme of the Christianity of the last decade of the nineteenth century. Politics are to be purified, society to be regenerated, this social evil, the drink evil, the opium evil and a host of other evils, are to be suppressed or abolished. The world lends the financial and executive power; the Church supplies the "moral forces."

Thus the world is systematically taught to forget that the Lord God has a controversy with it as to the question of its salvation, its life and peace. Thus the one witness in the world and to the world—that the world's ways are enmity against God, that the carnal mind does not and cannot know God nor the things of God—the Church of the living God, is falsifying God's testimony to the world, by lending

her best energies to the world's scheme of self-improvement and self-development. If modern Christians only hear that "the world is going to be made better," they become inspired to work and to give. But when they are reminded that they are called first of all to preach by word and life, crucifixion to the world, separation from the world, denial, not development or culture, of self—they give you a strange look and strange answers. Why do we preach the gospel of the grace of God then? That the world be reminded that God means "by the foolishness of preaching" to confound the world's wisdom. That He intends by the weak things, and the base things, and the despised things of the world, to confound the mighty things of the world. We are perfectly willing to let the world try its very best to pull itself out of the mire, to set itself right before God and angels and men, to vindicate its own self-management. We are firmly persuaded of the final stupendous failure that will result. For God alone will be justified in the end.

We grieve to see the Church drawn into this world-improvement scheme, to see the bride of Christ debauched by the wily world, to see her testimony dimmed, and, of course, unheeded. But this gospel of grace must, and will be preached. God's wonderful offer of sonship and heirship with Christ to fallen and rebellious man is still to be held out. And sinners must, and will be saved out of this adulterous generation, to become infallible, incorruptible, and glorious kings and priests in the day of the revelation of their Lord and Saviour. Then they will appear with Him in glory, confessed by Himself as His own

before His Father and His holy angels. The cross bearers now will be the crown wearers then. And the world? Her worship of "humanity" will ere this have headed up into the worship of that Man of Sin, as the apostle calls him; the Man of the World, the Ideal Man, as marvelling humanity will style him. Those who would not that the Lamb should rule over them, will have the Beast for their lord and master. And his yoke will not be easy nor his burden light, as will be seen from Rev. 13:15-17. Him the Lord will destroy by the brightness of His glorious appearance, when He comes to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe, in that day. 2 Thess. 1:10; 2:8. And this brings us to our closing argument.

The coming of the Lord is to be hastened by the preaching of this glorious gospel. How strange that any of God's children should not only be indifferent to the speediness of the Lord's return, but that they should actually desire its delay. Strange, that any reader of the New Testament should fail to gather the impression that the Holy Spirit all through its pages dwells with infinite delight and fondness on this grand and glorious subject, the return of our Lord. It seems almost incredible that any one should ask, How can you desire the speedy appearance of that event which will seal the doom of the great mass of humanity? What a powerful hold traditional views have on the minds of men, for there is nothing said in all the New Testament, in connection with Christ's coming again, which reflects ominously or threateningly on the fate of any, except those who will not believe the gospel. And it cannot be shown that their

case will be any more hopeful if they die in their unbelief and rebellion, than if they should live and see Him appearing in flaming fire, to give vengeance, and execute judgment. But does not the Lord's return set an end to all gospel preaching, and to all offering of salvation to the human race? By no means. Only one thought here. The appearing of their once pierced but now glorified Messiah, will undoubtedly be not only the signal, but the very means, of the national conversion and re-habilitation of Israel into God's favor. In the very height of Jacob's greatest distress, will the Son of Man appear to deliver them from the awful tyranny of the Antichrist, that wicked Prince of whom Daniel spoke. The Lord's appearing signalizes his doom. He is cast alive into the pit. But Israel will be delivered, and will then own and bless Him "who cometh in the name of the Lord" to deliver them. And when "Israel's fullness" be come in, what will it mean to the nations of the earth but "life from the dead?" National conversion, world-wide submission to the saving power and righteous dominion of the Lord of lords and King of kings, will then be in order. Rom. 11:12, 15; Matt. 23:39. Then will Gentile misrule and oppression cease forever. Then will be the day for the abolition of evil, for the setting up of not only relatively good; but absolutely perfect government. Then will the law of the Lord go forth from Jerusalem, and His glorified saints will administer and execute it not only in the mind and spirit, but also in the power of the Lord, since they shall be like Him; for they [not the world] shall see Him as He is. Then there will be infallible, incorruptible, immortal rulers, governors, kings and

priests. Then the Utopian dreams and visions of men, of a golden age, will be more than realized. Then that on which the Church is to-day prematurely wasting her best energies, namely, the regeneration of the world, will surely come; because, then, merely temporary dams will no longer be constructed to stem the swelling tide of corruption for a season, until it rises higher and overflows the dam; but the very fountain head of that stream will be stopped. Satan will be bound, to deceive the nations no more. Ah, if our would-be world-reformers would only see that with all their heroic efforts and struggles against the forces of evil, they are only delaying the day when Satan's work shall be at length cut short on the earth! Instead of hastening the good time coming, they are doing all in their power to put it off indefinitely. The only thing that will hasten it is to hasten the Lord's return. As far as we understand the Scriptures, He waits for one thing, and one thing only—namely, the completion of His body, of the number of those who are called to be co-heirs with Him. These are to be gathered to Him out of all nations by the gospel of the grace of God. The Church, being herself called to form this body, has only one work to which to bend all her God-given powers, and to devote all her time and talents, to wit, to bring as many souls as possible out of all nations, to a saving knowledge of the grace and power of God and into fellowship with Christ our Head and Lord. In doing this, and this only, she will, incidentally, do vastly more toward counter-acting the forces of corruption in the world than by organizing ever so many, and vigorous crusades against existing abuses and evils. For it is only the

true salt after all, which prevents the "flesh" from becoming putrid. Thus the Church by turning herself into a world-reforming agency, not only fails of her high and heavenly calling "out of this world" into "citizenship above," but she is frustrating the very end she is seeking to accomplish, by becoming salt that has lost its savor.

The one prayer, then, which the Church of God should send up continually and fervently, is the prayer: "Even so, come, Lord Jesus." Her eyes fixed upon this goal, she will keep herself free from entanglements and alliances with the world for the latter's improvement. She will make her own calling and election sure. She will joyfully go forth to the ends of the earth calling sinners to repentance and saving men out of this present evil age. Thus she will be in line with God's purposes in this age.



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